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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3188
INFO RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN IMMEDIATE 1263
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 8777
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 8566
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 4848
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 9657
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE 1942
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE 7614
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE 0369
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 0070
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 1033
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE 5490
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE 2256
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM IMMEDIATE 0364
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE 3903
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE 0140
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001558

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2017
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: PEACE COMMISSIONER RESTREPO ON PARAMILITARIES, ELN
PROCESS, AND THE FARC

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo said he is talking to the former paramilitary leaders in Itagui prison to encourage them not to disrupt the Justice and Peace Law process. President Uribe is concerned by his security forces, failure to capture Vicente Castano and other renegade paramilitary leaders, and has told Restrepo to make a first-hand assessment of security conditions in areas where demobilized paras are concentrated. Restrepo said the GOC is pushing the ELN to implement a cease-fire and release kidnapping victims by April 8; the ELN continues to delay a decision due to internal differences. Restrepo put the odds of concluding an agreement by the end of March at 50/50. He said FARC intransigence made the prospect of serious talks with the terrorist group on either a humanitarian accord or a peace process unlikely in the foreseeable future. End Summary

PARAMILITARY PROCESS

12. (C) Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo told us March 6 President Uribe had instructed him to resume a dialogue with the former paramilitary leaders held in Itagui prison. Uribe fears the leaders, discontent with the conditions within Itagui will lead them to try to disrupt the peace process. Restrepo's goal is to encourage the leaders to participate in the Justice and Peace Law process and to refrain from promoting the emergence of new criminal groups by addressing their concerns regarding prison conditions, visiting privileges, reintegration programs for demobilized paras, etc. He is not authorized to restart negotiations on substantive issues such as extradition or asset forfeiture. Restrepo said he has met three times with the former para

leaders over the last month, but has made little progress in assuaging their concerns. It is difficult to do so, since he has little to offer them, he noted.

13. (C) Restrepo said the Colombian security forces, failure to capture paramilitary leader Vicente Castano and other paramilitary figures that have abandoned the peace process is embarrassing the GOC. He met with the military High Command three weeks ago to push them to energize their efforts against Castano et al, but they do not appear to have done so. Restrepo said corruption within the military and police is a major obstacle in this regard. President Uribe is so concerned by the security forces, failure that he has ordered Restrepo to reach out to Castano again to try to persuade him to rejoin the peace process. Uribe has also asked Restrepo to travel to the regions where demobilized former paras are concentrated to make a personal assessment of security conditions on the ground. Restrepo doubts his efforts to reach out to Castano will succeed. Castano is under little military pressure, and Restrepo cannot meet Castano,s demands. (Note: In an open, undated letter to Restrepo released in November, Castano alleged the GOC had violated numerous commitments made during the peace negotiations, including extradition, political status, and incarceration.)

ELN DEAL BY END OF MONTH?

14. (C) Restrepo put the odds at 50/50 that the GOC will conclude a ceasefire agreement with the ELN by the end of March. He has largely agreed on the details of an accord

with his counterparts at the table, but the ELN leadership*reflecting internal differences*continues to delay the signing of a deal. Some ELN members would prefer to seek a rapprochement with the FARC. Hence, the ELN is currently pushing the GOC to agree to hold public discussions on issues such as political reform and &the legislative agenda for peace.⁸ After these discussions, the ELN would sign a ceasefire deal. Restrepo said the GOC has rejected this approach. The GOC is insisting the ELN conclude a ceasefire accord by the end of March, and begin implementation on April 8. This would include the ELN,s release of all kidnapping victims. Restrepo said the deadline could slip if the ELN asks for more time, but the GOC will not make further substantive concessions absent a ceasefire.

15. (C) Restrepo said the ELN is under military, diplomatic and political pressure to make a deal. The FARC is trying to exterminate the group to seize its arms and drug routes; the Europeans have suspended financing (at Restrepo,s request) for the ELN,s Peace House (Casa dePaz) in Medellin and for the negotiating table; and Polo Democratico Mayor of Bogota Lucho Garzon said he will not meet with the group again unless it accepts a ceasefire. He said Venezuela and Cuba continue to provide logistical support to the talks, and also appear to be encouraging the ELN to sign the accord.

16. (C) Restrepo said the Colombian military is prepared to implement a &mobile⁸ ceasefire, through radio communications with ELN units. The GOC expects the OAS to help verify an accord--with the United Nations playing a more political role--but this remains to be settled. In addition to Spain, Switzerland, Norway, Cuba and Venezuela, the GOC wants Italy, Holland and Japan to be involved. The ELN is pressing for Nicaragua and Ecuador to play a role. He said once the ELN implements a ceasefire and releases its kidnap victims, the GOC will likely urge the European Union to lift its designation of the ELN as a terrorist organization. It will also provide the ELN increased political space inside Colombia. He said the ELN continues to push for a total amnesty. The GOC will insist the ELN tell the truth about its criminal actions, and will only support an amnesty for political crimes. In the end, the Colombian Congress will have to resolve this issue.

FARC REMAINS INTRANSIGENT

¶17. (C) Restrepo said there is no prospect of serious talks with the FARC on either a humanitarian accord or a peace process for the foreseeable future. Encouraged by the parapolitical scandal and the presence of leftwing governments in Ecuador and Venezuela, the FARC is already looking past President Uribe,s tenure. The FARC,s General Staff met recently and decided to eliminate the ELN, launch new military and organizational efforts to build its capacity in the mid-term, and start a diplomatic initiative to boost its international standing. In this context, the FARC is organizing pro-FARC fora in Sweden and Mexico, and Raul Reyes has agreed to receive Swiss and French representatives to hear their proposals--not those of the GOC--on a humanitarian exchange. Restrepo said despite his pessimism, the GOC maintains communication channels with the FARC. He confirmed the recent &secret8 GOC emissary to the FARC, who he identified as longtime associate of Alvaro Leyva and part-time journalist Lazaro Vivero, returned with the standard FARC position*GOC demilitarization of Florida and Pradera municipalities prior to the start of humanitarian talks.

INCIPIENT DOUBTS ABOUT GOC STRATEGY

¶18. (C) Restrepo voiced concern that opinion polls show a gradual weakening of public support for the GOC,s democratic security policy. Uribe remains personally popular, but a growing body of public opinion doubts the credibility of the paramilitary process, supports a humanitarian exchange, and questions the president,s handling of the guerrillas. He has proposed that the GOC strengthen its discourse on democratic security and push coalition political parties to be more active in their defense of the strategy.
DRUCKER